THE NEW
INDIAN EXPRESS

BENGALURU • MONDAY • JANUARY 10, 2022 • ₹9.00 • PAGES 16 • LATE CITY EDITION

READ SHARE FOLLOW
newindianexpress.com
facebook.com/thenewindianexpress twitter.com/newindianexpress
instagram.com/newindianexpress

EVIDENCE OF WATER ON MOON FOUND ON-SITE FOR FIRST TIME

Prior discoveries of water have been based only on samples returned to Earth or data gathered by instruments from afar

LUNAR SURFACE MUCH DRIER THAN THE EARTH

A device on-board China's Chang'e 5 probe analysed the mineralogical composition of a patch of soil and a rock, and detected water on the spot. The analysis revealed that the lunar soil at the landing site contains less than 120 parts-per-million (ppm) water or 120 grams water per tonne while the rock carries 180 ppm, much drier than that on Earth

CHANDRAYAAN-1 WAS THE FIRST TO FIND IT

- Scientists believe it was the solar wind that contributed to the humidity of lunar soil as it brought hydrogen that makes up water
- In 2018, data gathered by NASA's Moon Mineralogy Mapper on India's first lunar probe, Chandrayaan-1, conclusively established that there exists water ice on the Moon's surface | P12

1,731
GRAMS WORTH OF SAMPLES BROUGHT BACK TO THE EARTH BY THE PROBE

CHENNAI • MADURAI • VIJAYAWADA • BENGALURU • KOCHI • HYDERABAD • VISAKHAPATNAM • COIMBATORE • KOZHIKODE • THIRUVANANTHAPURAM • BELAGAVI • BHUBANESWAR • SHIVAMOGGA • MANGALURU • TIRUPATI • TIRUCHY • TIRUNELVELI • SAMBALPUR • HUBBALLI • DHARMAPURI • KOTTAYAM • KANNUR • VILLUPURAM • KOLLAM • TADEPALLIGUDEM • NAGAPATTINAM • THRISSUR • KALABURAGI

Congress workers, led by KPCC president DK Shivakumar, take out a padayatra demanding the early implementation of Mekedatu project, from Sangama in Kanakapura taluk of Ramanagara district on Sunday | VINOOKUMAR T

A watershed? Cong begins yatra, govt shows restraint

DEVARAJ B HIREHALLI
@ Kanakapura

WITH the Basavaraj Bommai-led BJP government seemingly not in a mood to take on and scuttle Congress party's 10-day padayatra, demanding the implementation of Mekedatu irrigation project, the event took off with over 7,000 people taking part on Sunday at Sangama, the confluence of Cauvery and Arkavathi rivers.

But the grand old party suffered a setback with Congress Legislature Party leader Siddaramaiah, aged 73, getting exhausted after climbing a 4-5 km steep road in the hot sun in this patch of Eastern Ghats. He returned to Bengaluru midway, while other leaders completed the scheduled 15 km trek for the day.

Earlier, a video of KPCC president DK Shivakumar stumbling while performing a pooja in the Cauvery river went viral on social networking sites with BJP trolling him. "He could not cross Mekedatu (goat's leap), let goat take a leap," it tweeted.

But Congress managed to launch the event with much fanfare with a host of leaders and local seers taking part.

Though the government had issued a warning on Saturday that any violation of weekend curfew and Covid norms would not be tolerated, no action was taken against rallyists. "We are on river Cauvery with the flags of the nation, state and raitha sangha flying high and swamis, senior leaders and celebrities throwing their weight behind us. Arrest us if you can," Shivakumar dared.

Congress had invited Kannada actor Shivarajkumar, but he did not turn up, while another actor Duniya Vijay attended with other cine artistes.

Though the marchers crowded around and some of them had their masks down, the police were helpless. Ramanagara Superintendent of Police S Gireesh and his counterpart from Bengaluru Rural Kona Vamshi Krishna supervised the security situation.

The Mekedatu Padayatra is unique and achieved its motto of uniting the leaders of the Congress party cutting across the regions up to Bidar as all of them have taken part. It has also proved a binding force to unite the Kannadigas for a just cause

Mallikarjuna Kharge, Leader of Opposition, Rajya Sabha

CONTINUED ON: P6

Modi takes stock amid big clusters

Close to 400 Parliament employees infected

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ New Delhi

WITH humongous clusters of close to 400 Parliament employees and 150 Supreme Court registry officials and staff members testing positive for Covid, Prime Minister Narendra Modi held a review meet on Sunday and stressed the need to take area-specific measures, besides accelerating vaccination of the adolescent age group.

Modi will soon resume regular interactions with chief ministers for specific interventions to manage the pandemic, as he did during the second wave last year. "PM said that a meeting with CMs be convened to discuss state-specific scenarios, best practices and the public health response," the PMO said in a statement after the meeting, which was also attended by Union ministers Amit Shah and Mansukh Mandaviya and top health experts.

The interactions with chief ministers will likely be with high incidence states.

In Parliament, 65 staffers of Rajya Sabha Secretariat, 200 of Lok Sabha Secretariat and 133 of allied services tested positive between January 4-8, sources said. As for the Supreme Court, a few judges, too, have been found infected.

Meanwhile, the Centre will start administering booster doses to healthcare and frontline workers, and comorbid people in the 60-plus age group from Monday. Since the model code of conduct is now in place in five poll-bound states, Modi's photo will be filtered out of vaccination certificates issued there.

At the meeting with Modi, a detailed presentation was made on the status of Covid-19 in India, including areas of concerns with respect to states and districts with high positivity rates, the statement said. Delhi's positivity rate on Sunday climbed to 23.53% with 17 Covid deaths and 22,751 new cases in a day.

The Rajasthan government tightened its restrictions, ordering closure of schools in urban areas and other measures, including announcing Sunday curfew like in Tamil Nadu. P7

NATION WIDE	JAN 8	JAN 9
Fresh cases	1,41,986	1,59,632
Recoveries	40,895	40,863
Deaths	285	327

KARNATAKA	JAN 8	JAN 9
Fresh cases	8,906	12,000
Recoveries	508	901
Deaths	4	4

A health worker collects swab samples of a passenger at KSR Railway Station in Bengaluru on Sunday | ASHISHRIDHIRA HP

Booster dose drive for 21L people from today

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru

SIX lakh healthcare workers, seven lakh frontline workers and eight lakh people above 60 years with comorbidities across the state will be eligible for the precautionary (booster) doses opening from Monday. The drive will be launched by Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai at 10 am in Atal Bihari Vajpayee Medical College and Research Centre (formerly Bowring and Lady Curzon Medical College and Research Institute).

Beneficiaries who have received Covaxin and Covishield will be eligible for the booster dose of the same make. Those who have taken Sputnik are not yet eligible for the booster dose.

CoWIN slots for the precautionary dose will be available to eligible beneficiaries on completion of nine months (39 weeks) after the second dose.

CONTINUED ON: P3

State sees 12K cases, +vity rate up after 6 months

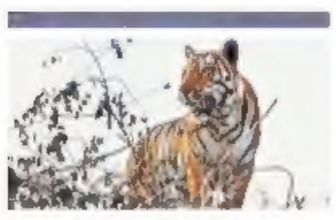
EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ Bengaluru

KARNATAKA on Sunday reported 12,000 Covid cases, of which Bengaluru contributed 9,020, witnessing a drop in recovery rate, while mortality rate fell for the second time in four days and for two days in the state capital. The state reported a relatively high number of discharges at 901.

With the big number added, the state's Covid tally shot up to 30,51,958 with 49,602 active cases that saw a rise of 28.81 per cent. Bengaluru's tally rose to 12,99,319, recording a 26.16 per cent increase in active cases which stood at 40,570.

Karnataka saw its first increase in positivity rate on Sunday since June 4 when it was 8.81 per cent — the peak of the second wave of the pandemic. The rate has been consistently falling since then and it stood at 5.28 per cent on Saturday. On Sunday, however, it went a notch up to 5.29 per cent.

Health officials attributed the fall in mortality rate and a rise in positivity rate to a higher number of people testing positive, while the number of deaths has continued to remain in single digits since October 31. The state has so far lost 38,370 lives to Covid, of which 16,422 are from Bengaluru.



TIGER
CENSUS FROM JAN 23
The forest dept has issued a circular to tiger reserves and wildlife sanctuaries to prepare for the all-India tiger census field exercise, which will begin this month | P5

Day after election code, Modi plans day to honour Sikh icons

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ New Delhi

A day after the model code of conduct for polls came into force in five poll-bound states, including Punjab, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday announced that December 26 shall be observed as *Veer Baal Diwas* to mark the martyrdom of Sahibzada Zorawar Singh and Sahibzada Fateh Singh.

He made the announcement in a series of tweets while paying tribute to Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth Sikh guru, on his birth anniversary. Zorawar Singh (9) and Fateh Singh (7) have a hallowed place in Sikh lore as they let themselves be bricked alive by Aurangzeb's army to protect their faith.

Modi's gesture brought muscular nationalism to the centre-stage of the Assembly polls. Not surprisingly, BJP's ally and former Punjab chief minister Captain Amarinder Singh welcomed it. "The courage portrayed by Sahibzades under enormous oppression is unparalleled and everyone across the globe must know about their supreme sacrifice. This is a commendable step in that direction," he tweeted.

Inclusive, harmonious

"The martyrs envisioned a world that is inclusive and harmonious. It is the need of the hour for more people to know about them," Modi said

Indian Council for Cultural Relations president Vinay Sahasrabuddhe, too, hailed it, saying the decision is in the spirit that history is a part of our collective identity.

In his series of tweets, Modi said *Veer Baal Diwas* will be observed on the same day Zorawar Singh and Fateh Singh attained martyrdom after being sealed alive in a wall. "These two greats preferred death instead of deviating from the noble principles of Dharma. The bravery and ideals of Mata Gujri, Sri Guru Gobind Singh Ji and the four Sahibzades give strength to millions of people. They never bowed to injustice," the prime minister added.

STRICT NORMS
Police personnel stop a pedestrian and check his documents during the weekend curfew in Bengaluru on Sunday | SHIVAKUMAR BM

31-year-old arrested for blackmailing minister's son

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ Bengaluru

THE city police on Saturday arrested the 31-year-old son of an eminent astrologer for allegedly blackmailing the son of Minister for Cooperation ST Somashekar. The accused allegedly made repeated calls to the minister's staff, threatening to upload an obscene but morphed video clip of the minister's son Nishanth on online websites.

Somashekar said the accused had demanded money for not uploading the video, but had not mentioned the amount.

Based on Nishanth's complaint, the Cyber Crime police tracked down the accused, Rahul Bhat, and arrested him after he returned from Dubai. He is a resident of RT Nagar.

After Bhat's arrest, Somashekar said the accused had contacted his close staff to threaten that it was the last chance and he would upload the video on social media. Three calls were made from an international destination in December the minister said.

The morphed video clip had been sent to some people close to Nishanth. "It is a deep-rooted conspiracy to scuttle my political growth. My son Nishanth is innocent," Somashekar said.

The police produced Bhat before a magistrate and handed him over to the Central Crime Branch (CCB) for further investigation. Two more accused, including the daughter of a politician, are involved in the case, the police said. She is said to be living abroad.

'Kannada to be made must in pre-primary, primary classes'

ENS @ Bengaluru

MEASURES will be taken to implement Kannada at pre-primary and primary classes in all private schools, Primary and Secondary Education Minister BC Nagesh has said.

During a meeting on the National Education Policy 2020 (NEP), he said strict measures will be taken to make Kannada compulsory across the state.

The proposed mandatory implementation of Kannada as part of NEP in degree courses had run into trouble with the Karnataka High Court shooting down the government order a few months ago.

NEP is due to be implemented in phases for pre-primary schools in the coming academic year, with multiple meetings taking place to discuss its implementation.

AIMING HIGH

All in their genes... Young Siddis train to be top athletes

Selected youngsters from the Siddi tribe at a training session | EXPRESS

ASHWINI M SRIPAD
@ Bengaluru

DASTAGIR Abdul Siddi from Gunjavati, a remote village near Karwar, was in tenth standard when he dreamt of joining the Army. Someone at his village told him that he has to run fast to be selected for the forces. As there was no proper athletic track or even a ground near his village, he cleared some shrubs near his house and started practising. Only when he joined the first PU in Karwar did he see athletic grounds, where students trained.

Dastagir is from Siddi community, originally from South-East Africa and settled in some parts of Uttara Kannada district for centuries. Many youngsters are first-generation school-goers, while their parents continue to work as daily wagers.

"After college hours, coach Prakash Renukar trained some students and made them run at college grounds. For nearly a month, all I did was stand there and watch them train. One day, the coach came up to me and asked why I just stood there and watched. I told him I was interested in running and he included me in the team," he said.

Dastagir is one of 52 youngsters from Siddi community who will be trained in sports in Bengaluru. The Sports Department will take care of their regular education apart from their training, which will start from Tuesday. Dastagir was looking for some sports platform when he landed at a camp organised by the department to identify talented Siddi boys and girls, who are believed to have superior physical strength.

The Department conducted 18 different tests in September last year for 500 Siddi community children below 18 years. Of them, 100 were selected and were given one-week training in November. Of them, 52 were picked up for further training in boxing, swimming, athletics and other sports. "I cover 100 metres in 11.05 seconds and my aim is to bring it down under 10 seconds. I will shift my college here as I will also be training. I will represent India one day," he said confidently. P5

Siddis are neglected and live in backward, rural areas. They have the potential to win national and international awards

KC Narayana Gowda, Sports Minister